



# Tree Work Application For Removal and Pruning Permits



Department of Parks and Recreation  
2001 Pacific Blvd, San Mateo, CA 94403

Phone: 650-522-7420 Fax: 650-522-7421 trees@cityofsanmateo.org

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Tree Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Tree(s):

- Heritage Tree (see FAQ page for definition)
- Street Tree

Work to be performed:

- Removal
- Prune more than 1/4 of the crown or more than 1/3 of the root system

Number of Trees: \_\_\_\_\_ Diameter of Tree(s) measured 48" above ground: \_\_\_\_\_

Species: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Work (describe in detail): \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Tree (in relation to residence):  Front  Rear  Side  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the tree behind a locked gate?  Yes  No

Property Owner (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Owner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from Tree Address): \_\_\_\_\_

Is applicant the owner?  Yes  No

Does the owner live at the Tree Address?  Yes  No

OPTIONAL: Submission of photos and/or an arborist report may expedite your permit.

Submitting photos?  Yes  No

Submitting an arborist report?  Yes  No

**FEES ARE NOT DUE AT THIS TIME – fees are due at the time the permit is issued. Fees include: 1) \$75 tree permit fee, and 2) a refundable \$425.00 tree deposit if the work requires tree removal; there is no permit fee for STREET TREE permits.** The tree replacement deposit will be returned once the replacement tree(s) has been planted and that replant has been inspected and confirmed by City staff. In some cases, the Managing Arborist will provide direction on the replacement species and location of the replant (as outlined in Section 13.52.050 (b) S.M.M.C.). The applicant has up to 12 months from the issued permit date to request a replant inspection. The applicant is not required to be present at the time of the replant inspection. *If the replant condition is not fulfilled within 12 months, the deposit will be forfeited and applied towards planting trees in public spaces elsewhere in the City.*

----- [Office Use Only] -----

## TREE PERMIT

*A copy of this permit page must be posted on the job site at all times while work is being performed.*

Emergency Permit

Permit granted by Managing Arborist:

Date Issued:

FEES:

No permit fee (Street tree permits only)

\$75 permit fee

\$425 tree deposit (refunded when replanting condition is fulfilled)

REPLANTING CONDITIONS:

Replant: \_\_\_\_\_ 24" box tree(s) on the property within 12 months of the permit date

No condition necessary

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Heritage Tree FAQ's

## What is the definition of a Heritage Tree in San Mateo?

1. Any Oak, Bay, Redwood, Buckeye, or Cedar, having a trunk diameter of 10 inches or more, measured at 4 feet (48 inches) above ground level.
2. Any tree with a trunk diameter\* of 16 inches or more, measured at 4 feet (48 inches) above ground level.

\*Measuring the diameter of your tree is straightforward, requiring just a few simple steps with the help of common household items. You can find easy measurement instructions on our website at <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/trees>.

## Are permits required to remove or prune Heritage Trees?

You must obtain a permit from the City's Managing Arborist if you wish to prune more than 25% of the existing foliage or 30% of the root system of any Heritage Tree growing in the City of San Mateo (Section 13.35, S.M.M.C.). Exceptions are extended only to the Police, Fire Departments and PG&E should they declare a tree a hazard to life or property.

Unless you are certain about the amount of foliage or roots you plan to remove from the tree, it is recommended that you consult the City or an ISA Certified Arborist before performing any work. You do not want to find yourself paying a penalty or harming your tree due to misguided maintenance.

## Where can I apply for a permit?

Tree Work Applications for permits can be obtained at the Parks Office located at 2001 Pacific Blvd., San Mateo; or online at <http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/trees>.

## Is there a fee for the permit?

A permit fee of \$75.00 is due at the time of permit issuance for work on any Heritage Tree. An additional tree replacement deposit of \$425.00 is due at the time of permit issuance for removals. The permit fee partially covers the cost of processing the permit, including an inspection of the tree by the City Arborist. The replacement deposit is returned once a new 24-inch box tree has been planted (valid for up to 12 months from the date of permit issuance). There is no fee for applications unless they are approved. Fees are required with all tree work with the exception of Street Tree pruning.

## What happens after I submit my Tree Work Application?

Upon receiving the application, a representative from the City's Managing Arborist office will inspect the tree and evaluate your reasons for removal against the guidelines of the Heritage Tree Ordinance Section 13.52.040. To grant any permit, all abutting property owners are notified in writing of the Managing Arborist's decision and have 10 days to request consideration. After the notification period, the property owner is informed that the permit can be paid for and picked up at the Park's Division office located at 2001 Pacific Blvd., San Mateo. For convenience, the office will also take payment over the phone at (650) 522-7420. The permit will then be emailed to you, along with a receipt.

## How long does it take to get a permit approved?

In most cases it takes approximately four weeks. It may take longer if the application is related to a construction development project, or if there is insufficient information provided and more is needed.

## What can I do to expedite the process of my permit?

The more supplementary information that can be provided along with the application, the easier and quicker it will be to assess the situation and reach a determination.

### Additional tips for an expedited permit process:

- The most helpful information would be in the form of visual aids such as a clear photo of the tree or any other related photos to support your request.
- Additional documentation will be requested in some cases. Examples of documentation include: a report from an ISA Certified Arborist, photos of damaged structures, letters of concern from neighbors, etc.

### **Can I appeal the decision?**

Any person may request reconsideration of a permit decision. Requests shall be in writing, and mailed or emailed to the Director of Parks & Recreation no later than 5:00 p.m. of the tenth calendar day after the decision.

### **Are tree protection measures required when building near a Heritage Tree?**

Depending on the scope and location of the project, the San Mateo Planning or Building Department may require that you submit a Tree Protection Plan prepared by an ISA Certified Arborist for any protected tree that may be impacted by construction. If the plan is sufficient to prevent harm to protected trees from reasonably foreseeable construction activities (as outlined in Section 13.52.025 S.M.M.C.) it shall be approved and monitored through completion of the project.

### **Can the Managing Arborist come out and offer guidance about my tree before I apply for a permit?**

No. The Managing Arborist can only inspect your tree after an application has been submitted.

### **Do I need a permit to remove a dead Heritage Tree?**

Yes. It is important that the Managing Arborist confirms the condition of your tree and issues a permit prior to removal. Please keep in mind that any helpful supplementary information (clear photos, reports, etc.) will expedite the processing of your application.

### **Will I be fined if a tree is removed without a permit?**

Yes. It is unlawful to remove or cause damage to a Heritage Tree without a permit. Penalties can be assessed to all parties involved in an unauthorized removal, including the homeowner and the contractor. For details regarding fines and penalties, please refer to section 13.52.055 of the San Mateo Municipal Code.

### **What happens once a removal permit has been issued?**

A Heritage Tree Removal Permit is valid for up to 12 months from date of issue. Within this 12-month period, the owner may remove the tree(s) and plant a new 24-inch box tree(s). A "replacement deposit" of \$425.00 is collected at the time of permit issuance. Once the replacement tree(s) has been planted, please contact the Parks Department to request a replant inspection. After an inspection by City staff verifies the replant, your deposit will be refunded by mail. If the replacement tree(s) is not planted within 12 months of the permit date, the deposit is forfeited and used to plant new trees in city parks, medians, and public areas.

### **Are there any specifications regarding the replacement tree?**

Yes. Replacement trees must be of 24-inch box size. This is a standard size available through tree growers. The replacement tree may be planted anywhere on the property, except in the public right of way. In some cases, the Managing Arborist will provide direction on the replacement species and location of the replant (as outlined in Section 13.52.050 (b) S.M.M.C.).

### **My tree has become dangerous during a storm. Do I still need a permit for an emergency removal?**

Generally speaking, exceptions to permits are extended only to the Police Department, Fire Departments and PG&E, should they declare a tree a hazard to life or property.

1. If your tree has caused a dangerous or life-threatening emergency: Call 911.

2. If your tree has become dangerous from a storm but is not causing an immediate threat: Call the Parks Department at (650) 522-7420. You will be issued an “emergency permit”, at which point the Managing Arborist will visit your property and issue the permit on site.

### **My neighbor has a tree that is causing damage to my property. Can the City do anything about it?**

The City cannot force the owner of the tree to remove or prune it. It is recommended that you work with your neighbor to arrive at a solution. If you are unable to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution, consider contacting the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center for assistance at (650) 513-0330.

### **Why does the City have a Heritage Tree Ordinance?**

In 1968, the City adopted a Heritage Tree Ordinance to preserve the great trees in the City and to encourage planting more trees. Heritage Trees are living landmarks and are an important part of San Mateo’s urban forest. As stated in the ordinance, it is our intent to pursue methods of solving tree-related problems, other than removing valuable trees unless absolutely necessary. The ordinance also ensures that Heritage Trees will be protected during construction.

Trees provide many benefits to our community including:

- Raising property values
- Providing wind and sun protection, thereby lowering heating and cooling bills
- Providing privacy as well as natural habits for song birds
- Reducing stress: in fact having trees close by has been proven to aid in recovery after surgery
- Providing over \$1.4 Million in net benefits to our City (City of San Mateo Urban Forest Resource Analysis, 2011)

### **I still have questions. How can I get additional information?**

Contact the Tree Division at (650) 522-7420, or email [trees@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:trees@cityofsanmateo.org).



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